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ABSTRACT

Students in the speech and theatre department at a Rhode Island university can receive one to three credits for forensic tournament participation and/or student coaching. A four-part evaluation system was designed to grade tournament participation. Students are notified by memo at the beginning of the semester that their final grades will be based on ratings from the student, the student's coach, Level 3 team members (those who have attended nine or more tournaments), and the Director of Forensics. The students provide a self-evaluation based on four criteria: interest in personal development, attitude toward forensic participants, support of team activities, and tournament success. The coach also rates the student on the first criterion, Level 3 team members on the second criterion, and the Director of Forensics on the third and fourth criteria. A grade summary sheet is mailed to each student, showing the grade for each of the four criteria, as well as the final grade. This grading system has several important features: it (1) is an integral part of the speech curriculum, (2) informs the learner about the criteria on which he or she will be graded, (3) evaluates both intellectual and social development, (4) includes input from multiple segments of the forensic program, (5) provides written feedback for the student, and (6) uses an organized method of record keeping. (Copies of the student memo, the self-evaluation sheet, and evaluation sheets for the coach, Level 3 team members, and the Director of Forensics are included.) (HTH)

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A SYSTEM FOR EVALUATING TOURNAMENT COMPETITION FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT

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CS 505 103

A SYSTEM FOR EVALUATING TOURNAMENT COMPETITION FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT

Carolyn Keefe

For the past seven years, the Department of Speech Communication and Theatre of West Chester University has been offering credit to students who are active members of the Forensic Society. Granted under the rubric SPC 399: Directed Research, one to three credits may be received for tournament work and/or student coaching. Two evaluation systems grew out of the need for the Director of Forensics to assign grades for these activities. This paper describes the way students are evaluated for their participation in tournaments.

Basis of the Grading System

The grading system, designed by the author, who has served as the Director of Forensics at West Chester since 1971, rests on the rationale that has been widely recognized by forensic educators. The 1974 National Developmental Conference on Forensics stated:

> The primary function of the forensics educator is to teach students--to help them develop skills, to cultivate high ethical and scholarly standards, and to establish a climate in which students have an exciting and enjoyable intellectual and social experience.[1]

This view was reiterated and expanded ten years later by the

conferees meeting in Evanston at the 1984 National Developmental Conference on Forensics. They specified the purposes of forensics as the development of basic intellectual skills and attitudes through training in a) research, analysis, and critical thinking skills, b) oral communication, and c) interdisciplinary fields. As such, forensics provides a foundation for future careers and a method of self-development and social interaction.[2]

The forensic program at West Chester University has always emphasized the dual purposes struck in these statements, that is, the development of both the intellectual and social skills of the student. Three faculty coaches and, on the average, three student coaches enrolled in SPC 399 guide the participants in research, analysis, speech composition, and practice speaking. Most of the coaching takes the form of tutorials, but during the week prior to a given tournament, one or two group coaching sessions are held. At these sessions, all the attendants have the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. Thus growth in intellectual and communicative abilities is the direct concern of everyone connected with the WCU Forensic Society.

Although social skills are fostered by the numerous intra- and inter-squad communication exchanges, team management affords a deliberative training ground for personal development. Annually seven officers--about one-third of the team--are elected, three as Forensic Society leaders and four to represent the Pennsylvania Iota Chapter of Pi Kappa Delta. These students, some who are office holders for the first time, work in conjunction with the

Director of Forensics in choosing tournaments, allocating funds, keeping financial records, enforcing the Forensic Society Constitution and disciplining offenders, directing and judging the semi-annual basic speech contest, recruiting and auditioning prospective members, fund raising, running an intercollegiate novice tournament, and planning the annual party. These activities encompass the entire school year and involve all members of the team in one way or another.

Components of the Evaluation System

A four-part evaluation system was designed to grade tournament participation. Gronlund points out that measuring learning outcomes in the areas of skills (such as speaking and oral reading) and social attitudes is difficult with the usual paper-and-pen testing. Generally, however, these outcomes can be evaluated through observational techniques, peer-appraisals, and self-reports.[3] The West Chester system utilizes all these methods in four rating sheets.

At the outset of the semester, each student who is enrolled in SPC 399 for tournament participation receives the memo shown in the Appendix, page 8. This sheet specifies that the student's final grade will be based upon ratings from the student himself or herself, the student's coach, Level 3 team members (those who have attended nine or more tournaments), and the Director of Forensics. The student will provide a self-evaluation on four criteria: 1) Interest in Personal Development, 2) Attitude toward Forensic Participants, 3) Support of Team Activities, and

4) Tournament Success. The coach will rate the student on the first criterion, Level 3 team members on the second criterion, and the Director of Forensics on the third and fourth criteria. The memo further stipulates that the rating from each rating form will carry a 25 percent weight.

The Self-Appraisal Rating Form (see Appendix, page 9) is the first component in the system. It displays a criteria rating scale linking a value term with each of four numbers that correspond from high to low with the grades A, B, C, and D: 8 excellent; 6 good; 4 fair; and 2 poor. Furthermore, the form lists the behaviors and products subsumed under the four criteria on which the rating is to be based. Interest in Personal Development is seen as initiative in finding new material and doing research, willingness to try new events (over required number), dependability in keeping coaching appointments, preparation for coaching time, and rehearsing before events. Attitude toward Forensic Participants includes friendliness toward own and other team members, helping team members (other than coachee), and attending rounds of team members. Support of Team Activities is shown by attendance at Forensic Society meetings, support of fund raising, and judging or control room work for speech contest and novice tournament. Tournament Success is defined as ranks and ratings at tournaments and improvement in competence. After assigning a point value to each criterion, the self-rater adds the numbers and registers a grade according to the total point range shown on the form.

The second component takes the form of a memo (see Appendix,

page 10) from the Director of Forensics to the student's coach who is asked to rate the student on Interest in Personal Development. Here again the behaviors for the criterion are specified and the same numerical rating scale is used. Space is provided for the coach to justify his or her rating.

Input from team members is provided on the third form (see Appendix, page 11). Approximately two weeks before the end of the semester, the students on Level 3 each receive a rating sheet memo from the Director of Forensics. The behaviors constituting Attitude toward Forensic Participants appear at the top, followed by the adopted point range. Below this material is a three-column grid headed by "Points," "Names," and "Comments: Please justify your ratings." The names of the SPC 399 students appear in the middle column. The Level 3 members then fill out the sheet and return it to the Director of Forensics by the close of the semester. The points assigned to each student are added, and the mean is calculated to determine the grade on this criterion.

Lastly, the Director of Forensics completes the evaluation process by filling out sheet number four. Like the other forms, this one displays the rating scale, the appropriate criteria and subsumed behaviors, and space for justifying the assigned ratings. At the bottom of the page, the evaluator enters the total points, the mean, and the resultant grade. (See page 12 of the Appendix.)

In order to provide feedback for the student, a grade summary sheet is mailed to him or her. It reminds the recipient of the earlier memo concerning the grading system and then shows the grade for each of the four criteria, as well as the final grade. A space

for comments enables the Director of Forensics to summarize the responses from the four evaluation sheets. This form appears in the Appendix on page 13.

An aid to record keeping was developed for the system. The Tournament Credit Rating Form, shown in the Appendix on page 14, enables the Director of Forensics to see at a glance the date the forms were distributed and if and when they were returned. Other information pertinent to grading also appears on this sheet.

Conclusion

The four-component grading system described in this paper has several important features. It 1) is an integral part of curricular instruction in speech communication,[4] 2) informs the learner about the criteria on which he or she will be graded, 3) evaluates both intellectual and social development, 4) receives input from multiple segments of the forensic program, 5) provides written feedback for the student, and 6) utilizes an organized method of record keeping. Certainly not every Director of Forensics who is faced with the problem of grading tournament participation[5] will find this system adaptable, but at West Chester University it has served as one way to carry out the goals of forensic education.

Notes

[1]James H. McBath, ed. Forensics as Communication: The Argumentative Perspective. Skokie, IL: National Textbook Company, 1975, p. 18.

[2]1984 National Developmental Conference on Forensics, "A Rationale for Forensics," Evanston, Illinois, September 12-15, 1984, p. 2 (Typewritten).

[3]Norman E. Gronlund, Measurement and Evaluation in Teaching 2d edition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), pp. 409-10. For a useful discussion on grading, see C. R. Carlson, "Feedback for Learning," in Ohmer Milton and Associates, On College Teaching (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1980), pp. 125-52. See also Wilbert J. McKeachie, Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher, 7th ed. (Lexington, Massachusetts, D. C. Heath and Company, 1978), pp. 174-86.

[4]Donald W. Klopf lists this feature as an objective of the forensic program. See his Coaching & Directing Forensics (Skokie Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1982), p. 5.

[5]In "The Forensic Participation Course: What Is It Really For?" The Forensic 70 (Spring 1985): 71, Robert S. Littlefield reports that one of the problems indicated by coaches whose schools offer such a course is how to grade students.

A P P E N D I X

TO: Students electing SPC 399 credit for speech/debate tournament participation

FROM: Dr. Carolyn Keefe

Each of the four ratings below carry a 25 percent weight toward the semester grade:

1. Self-Appraisal Rating Form

   Each student must complete this sheet, which includes four criteria: 1) Interest in Personal Development, 2) Attitude toward Forensic Participants, 3) Support of Team Activities, and 4) Tournament Success.

2. Rating of criterion (1) above by student's coach.

3. Rating of criterion (2) above by Level 3 team members.

4. Rating of criteria (3) and (4) above by the Director of Forensics.

SPC 399: Directed Studies
in Speech Communication
Dr. Carolyn Keefe

SELF-APPRAISAL RATING FORM

_____
APPRAISER

Criteria Rating Scale: 8 excellent; 6 good; 4 fair; 2 poor
Total Points: 28-32=A; 20-27=B; 12-19=C; 4-11=D

In the space under each criteria, explain your rating number. No points will be calculated into your grade without this explanation.

POINTS	CRITERIA
_____	1. Interest in Personal Development: initiative in finding new material and doing research, willingness to try new events (over required number), dependability in keeping coaching appointments, preparation for coaching time, rehearsing before events
_____	2. Attitude toward Forensic Participants: friendliness toward own and other team members, helping team members (other than coachee), attending rounds of team members
_____	3. Support of Team Activities: attendance at Forensic Society meetings, support of fund raising, judging or control room work for speech contest and novice tournament
_____	4. Tournament Success: ranks and ratings at tournament, improvement in competence

_____ TOTAL POINTS _____ GRADE

SUBJECT: _____
Coachee

TO: _____
Coach

FROM: Dr. Carolyn Keefe

Please rate your coachee on the following criterion by assigning points on this scale: 8 excellent; 6 good; 4 fair; 2 poor.

_____ Points — Interest in Personal Development: initiative in finding new material and doing research, willingness to try new events (over required number), dependability in keeping coaching appointments, preparation for coaching time, rehearsing before events.

Briefly justify your rating.

TO: _____
Level 3 Team Member

FROM: Dr. Carolyn Keefe

Please rate each student below by assigning points on this scale:
8 excellent; 6 good; 4 fair; 2 poor.

Criterion: Attitude toward Forensic Participants: showing friendliness toward own and other team members, helping team members (other than coachee), attending rounds of team members.

Points	Names	Comments: Please justify your ratings

Kindly return this to me by the end of the semester. Thanks!

DIRECTOR OF FORENSICS' RATING FORM

_____
Name of Student

_____
Semester/Year

Rate the student on the following criteria by assigning points on this scale: 8 excellent; 6 good; 4 fair; 2 poor.

_____ Points — Support of Team Activities: attendance at Forensic Society meetings, support of fund raising, judging or control room work for speech contest and novice tournament

Justification for rating:

_____ Points — Tournament Success: ranks and ratings at tournaments, improvement in competence

Justification for rating:

_____ TOTAL POINTS _____ MEAN _____ GRADE

_____
Date

TO: _____
Name of Student

FROM: Dr. Carolyn Keefe

As you were notified at the beginning of the semester, your grade in SPC 399: Directed Studies consists of four ratings, each carrying a 25 percent weight. Below is a summary of the ratings you received.

	GRADE
1. Self-Appraisal Rating Form	_____
2. Coach's Rating Form	_____
3. Level 3 Team Members' Rating Form	_____
4. Director of Forensics' Rating Form	_____
FINAL GRADE	_____

Comments:

TOURNAMENT CREDIT RATING FORM

Fall_____ Spring_____ 198____

NAME	S.S.#	COACH(ES)	LEVEL	NO. OF CREDITS	TYPE OF ACTIVITIES	NO. REQ.	TOURNAMENTS ATTENDED	SELF-APPRAISAL		COACH'S APPRAISAL		LEVEL 3 SHEET		GRADE
								OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	